

Why Blu - Why Red

Albert Mertz

Stalke Out Of Space: Project. #29

Place: Galleri Kambur, Iceland
september 2001

Thanks to **Lone Mertz** for assistens

ALBERT MERTZ
WHY RED & WHY BLUE?
GALLERI KAMBUR, ICELAND 2001

From September 1, 2001, Galleri Kambur in Iceland hosted an exhibition of Albert Mertz. The exhibition was organized by visual artist and gallery owner Gunner Ørn, in collaboration with Albert Mertz's widow and long-time collaborator, Lone Mertz. The exhibition included a broad selection of gouaches from the 1980s, along with the work Red and Blue Husks from 1973. Lone Mertz supplemented the presentation with red and blue paintings of existing objects in the small gallery house and of stones in the surrounding landscape.

The American artist Lawrence Weiner accompanied Mertz on this Viking journey with the essay "I NEVER DID ASK ALBERT WHY RED & WHY BLUE?"

Stalke Out of Space hosted the event, which ran until October 1, 2001.



WHY BLUE- WHY RED, Invitation poster

ALBERT MERTZ (1920–1990)

Albert Mertz debuted as a teenager and was part of the experimental wing of Danish art from an early age. His work extended beyond painting and encompassed roles as a filmmaker and cultural writer. Between 1962 and 1976, he lived in France, where—far from the provincial art scene back home—he developed his red-blue painting style, inspired by international art discourses. He regarded art as a shared human concern, a special “science” of being human in the world. He advocated for art as a necessary playground beyond narrowly personal and expressive practices, which he considered a limitation within Danish art.

He returned to Denmark in the late 1970s and served as a professor at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen from 1980 until 1990. His work held an unusual position that became even more apparent after his death. Through his extensive knowledge of contemporary art, his vitality, and his strong influence, he significantly shaped the subsequent Danish art scene.

During the 1980s, Mertz participated actively in the international art scene and gained substantial recognition. In collaboration with Lawrence Weiner, he exhibited twice at Nordjyllands Kunstmuseum in Aalborg and at Galleri Stalke in Copenhagen. Outside Denmark, he participated in major group exhibitions in Paris and Munich. In 1986, he held his first and only solo exhibition in New York at poet Ted Greenwald’s gallery.

After his death, his work was presented at significant international venues, including the São Paulo Biennial in 1991. In 1999, four simultaneous exhibitions were held across museums in Denmark, each highlighting different aspects of his practice. Vestjællands Kunstmuseum hosted the exceptional exhibition *Til Albert (For Albert)*, presenting an overview of Albert Mertz’s conceptual investigations of the red-blue proposition. Daniel Buren (France), Joseph Kosuth, Les Levine, and Lawrence Weiner (USA) all created installations at the museum in Sorø.



Lone Mertz, Galleri Kambur, 2001

Albert Mertz was represented in numerous museums both nationally and internationally. The National Gallery of Denmark in Copenhagen had recently acquired an extensive collection of his work and was at the time presenting a selection of it in a new display.

Albert Mertz left behind an extraordinary and extensive body of work in the form of visual art and unpublished texts, confirming that he was one of Denmark’s greatest artists and that he created works intended for the future.

On August 4, 1990, a few months before his death, he wrote in his diary:

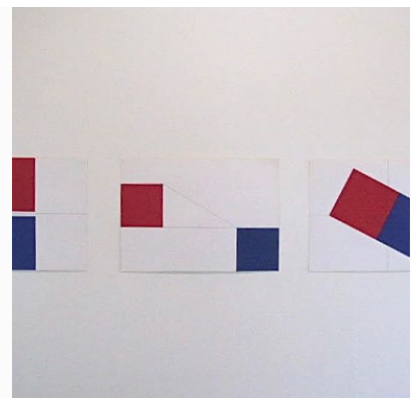
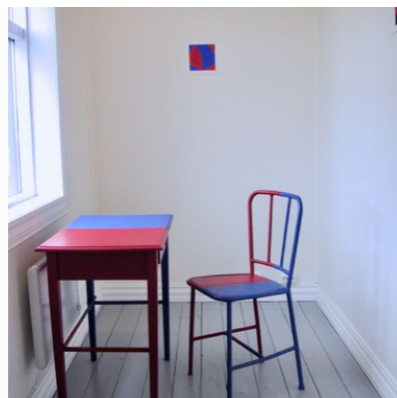
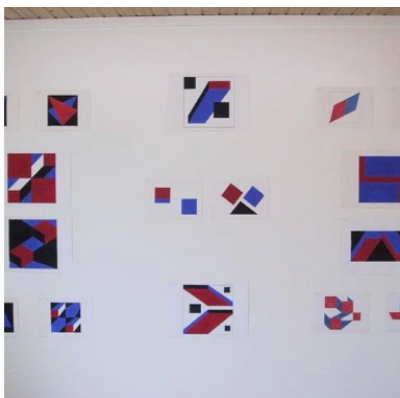
"Red/blue — I chose these two colors back then because they were clear and distinct and had very little natural association.

At one point, I claimed that they represented Yin and Yang — which they probably also did — but that was not so significant. The two colors should not be burdened with too much symbolism. If the viewer could extract something like that by looking at them, that was fine.

For me, they were essentially two modules that offered a wealth of possibilities.

Through the constant repetition of the same structure, it might very well have seemed like an insistence on a specific meaning — but that was not my intention. My original intention was that both the colors and the structure as a whole should, if not be neutral, then meaningless.

The urge to use profiles, houses, crosses, and similar motifs in red and blue arose from a desire to avoid the abstract style."



Albert Mertz, Galleri Kambur, 2001